

<i>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less Than Significant Impact</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
I. AESTHETICS – Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SETTING

The 35-mile-long pipeline extends mostly underground from its origin in Castro Street immediately adjacent to General Chemical’s facility in Richmond to the Pittsburg Power Plant in Pittsburg. Aboveground facilities are limited to the Hercules Pump Station in the City of Hercules and a one-mile section of pipeline that is aboveground through the Avon Marsh in the unincorporated area of Avon, east of the City of Martinez.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The pipeline either transects or skirts the four physiographic divisions of Contra Costa County: (1) the northern San Francisco Bay depression, (2) the highlands of the Coast Range, (3) the intermountain valleys, and (4) the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The northern edge of Contra Costa County is moderately to highly scenic, with views of the waterways and surrounding bluffs of what is commonly referred to as the Bay-Delta Region, which includes San Pablo Bay, Carquinez Strait, Suisun Bay, Honker Bay, the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. The North Bay Views in the distance from the Bay-Delta Region include the Vaca Mountains to the north, the Sonoma Mountains to the northwest, the Black Hills (including Mount Diablo) and Briones Hills to the south, and the coastal hills of the Marin Peninsula to the west. The quality of many views has been reduced, however, as a result of industrial development along the shoreline, including sugar refineries, rail yards, solid waste handling facilities, dredge spoils disposal areas, and other similar industrial land uses. This lack of visual quality is particularly apparent in the immediate vicinity of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way, which parallels the shoreline of the San Pablo Bay.

VISUAL CHARACTER AND POLICIES

Richmond

The Richmond General Plan does not define any aesthetic goals. However, the visual elements in the pipeline corridor include the San Pablo Bay waterfront, as well as various urban and industrial developments. The pipeline facilities are entirely underground and within the UPRR right-of-way in this section.

Pinole

One of the goals listed in the City of Pinole General Plan is to enhance the city's character by protecting key visual resources. Visual resource protection policies relevant to the pipeline include:

- ***OS2.1. Scenic Resources.*** Preserve significant knolls, stands of trees, rock outcrops, and ridgelines within the city that further the image of Pinole.
- ***OS2.2. View Protection.*** Preserve prominent views of scenic resources and the bay, and consider visual access and view corridors when reviewing development proposals.
- ***OS2.3. Open Space Separators.*** Maintain a continuous open space separator between Pinole and the cities of Hercules (Pinole Ridge) and El Sobrante/Richmond (El Sobrante Ridge).
- ***OS2.5. Ridgeline Protection.*** Locate and design structures and other public and private improvements so as to minimize cut and fill areas that will impact public views, safety, and surrounding uses, and avoid building profiles (silhouettes) being located above the ridgeline when viewed from public streets and designated public access areas.

Hercules

Hercules has a scenic setting where the higher areas east of Interstate 80 (I-80) overlook San Pablo Bay, with distant views of the coastal range in Marin County. Areas west of I-80, closer to the bay (and the pipeline corridor) also have scenic views. The City of Hercules General Plan notes, "Proposed elements within view of designated scenic routes in the city should be reviewed in terms of their visual impact."

The Hercules Pump Station is situated on Pacific Gas and Electric Company property between San Pablo Avenue and I-80, north of Highway 4. Most of the station's facilities are situated in a cut/fill area on the side of a hill north of the Franklin Canyon Road interchange for I-80. The adjacent lots are undeveloped grasslands. The visible aboveground facilities at the Hercules Pump Station include buildings, storage tanks, pumps, and heater stations, transformers, utility lines, evaporation ponds, and an impounding basin.

Martinez

The City of Martinez has adopted specific open space “policy zones” to address concerns about preservation of scenic areas. The policy regarding the waterfront area includes:

- The North Contra Costa Waterfront Zone (which includes the area just west of the Carquinez Bridge to the land east of Pacheco Creek) should remain essentially unimproved and devoted to open space land use. Most of this area is comprised of the marshes and mudflats of the waterfront area that have high value as natural habitats and as scenic and recreational areas.

The 4,000-foot replacement section would be partially located within the Martinez Regional Shoreline Park, approximately 200 feet north of the existing line. The UPRR right-of-way forms a strong visual boundary separating the downtown area from the shoreline park and its facilities. Views northward from the railroad right-of-way are of flat grassy areas in the park, framed by the waters of the Carquinez Strait and the hills overlooking Benicia. Views to the east include the Benicia-Martinez Bridge and the structures of the Martinez Refining Company (Equilon). Residential and industrial areas lie to the south, and the Franklin Hills Open Space and Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline Park to the west.

Pittsburg

The Pittsburg General Plan does not define any specific aesthetic elements for the area of the pipeline. The plan reports that perhaps the most distinguishing visual landmark in west Pittsburg is the Southern Energy Power Plant (formerly owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Company). The power plant (which is visible throughout much of downtown and west Pittsburg), along with the mixed urban and industrial areas of Pittsburg and the unincorporated area of Bay Point, negatively affects the scenic quality of the area along this section of the pipeline corridor.

Contra Costa County

The pipeline crosses four major unincorporated segments throughout Contra Costa County. The segments include the area between Richmond and Pinole, the area between Hercules and Martinez, the area between Martinez and the U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago), and the area between the U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago) and Pittsburg. The Contra Costa County General Plan 1995-2010 outlines development goals and policies that generally promote protection of the scenic qualities of the county, including:

- Preserve and protect areas of identified high scenic value, where practical, and in accordance with the Land Use Element map.
- Preserve the scenic qualities of the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River/Delta Shoreline.

Between the City of Richmond and the City of Pinole, the pipeline traverses approximately one mile across the unincorporated area of El Sobrante. In this area, the pipeline runs along the shoreline of the San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline Park. To the north, the scenic San Pablo Bay

and the bay's shoreline are the primary views. To the south, the unincorporated area of El Sobrante is a mix of industrial and urban development.

Between the City of Hercules and the City of Martinez, the route mainly follows the shoreline of San Pablo Bay and the Carquinez Strait. To the north of the pipeline corridor, the views of San Pablo Bay and Carquinez Strait are very scenic. However, views south of the pipeline corridor are generally of heavy industrial developments.

East of the City of Martinez to the U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago), the pipeline rests on pile supports aboveground for approximately one mile. The framework and pipeline are concealed from the nearby public highway by the elevated UPRR right-of-way. The natural features of the area are highly scenic with views of Avon Marsh, Shell Marsh, Suisun Bay, the bay's shoreline, and Pacheco Creek. However, the marsh habitat is relatively flat and prolific industrial development is visible throughout the area.

Between the U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago) and Pittsburg, in the unincorporated area of Bay Point, the visual characteristics remain mostly industrial and mixed urban developments.

U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago)

Views along the pipeline corridor through this section are primarily the marshes and mud flats of the Carquinez Strait along with the prominent industrial complexes located in the U.S. Naval Weapons Station (Port Chicago) and the adjacent unincorporated areas of Contra Costa County.

AESTHETICS IMPACTS DISCUSSION

- a) The proposed project makes use of an existing underground pipeline that passes through the cities of Richmond, Hercules, San Pablo, Pinole, Rodeo, and Martinez, and unincorporated areas of Contra Costa County, including Crockett, and an existing pump station located in the City of Hercules. However, an approximately 4,000-foot section of the line located within the City of Martinez was previously removed to allow construction of a rail facility. The identified new owner of the facility, San Pablo Bay Pipeline Company (SPBPC) apparently intends to replace this section of the pipeline. SPBPC has not formally announced its plans for construction activities for the missing section, or for maintenance and repair activities for the existing route. Much of the Richmond to Pittsburg Fuel Oil Pipeline route travels through areas that are of local importance either as viewpoints of local natural features, including San Pablo Bay, Carquinez Strait, Suisun Bay, and Honker Bay from the shorelines, or as important aesthetic resources that are viewed from other scenic viewpoints. In Martinez, the intended new route for the 4,000-foot missing section travels near important aesthetics resources, including Martinez Regional Shoreline (East Bay Regional Parks District), Waterfront Park, Martinez City Park, Historic Downtown Martinez, Carquinez Strait Shoreline Park, and Carquinez Scenic Drive.

For the existing underground pipeline, located primarily within railroad or public street right-of-ways, the sale and subsequent operation of the pipeline would have little to no effect on aesthetic resources along the pipeline route, with the possible exception of temporary disruption of views if and when SPBPC replaces or adds components of the pipeline. The pump station, located on 44.2 acres of land in the City of Hercules, is generally shielded from view from all directions, and its construction preceded essentially all development around it. Therefore, the project's only likely potential impact on aesthetics resources would be along the 4,000-foot replacement section in the City of Martinez. SPBPC has not yet announced its plans for the underground construction of the missing section. However, as mitigation for construction activity that SPBPC might conduct, PG&E stated in its Proponent's Environmental Assessment that "landscape features and recreational equipment would be restored to pre-construction conditions," and that "construction activities affecting parklands and trail systems would be coordinated with the East Bay Regional Park District and the City of Martinez." SPBPC would be required to implement these mitigation measures as part of the sales agreement for the Pipeline, but are also formalized below. Therefore, with these mitigation measures, the impact of construction on aesthetics resources would be less than significant.

Since the crossing at Alhambra Creek and the unnamed drainage near Ferry Street is to be performed by underground auguring or directional drilling and property landscaped, there would be no permanent aesthetic impacts during operation of the pipeline.

Impact I.1: Installation of the 4,000-foot replacement section of pipeline in Martinez would have a temporary, but significant impact on scenic vistas viewable from the adjacent shoreline parks administered by the East Bay Regional Park District and from portions of the City of Martinez.

Mitigation Measure I.1: Prior to commencing construction activities, the new owner (SPBPC) of the Richmond to Pittsburg Fuel Oil Pipeline and Hercules Pump Station shall coordinate construction activities affecting parklands and trail systems with the East Bay Regional Park District and the City of Martinez. This shall include submittal of an aesthetic resources plan to the City and the Parks District that addresses the potential for construction activities to have impacts on aesthetics resources, including specific measures that will be taken to restore such resources to pre-construction conditions or to make improvements to these resources in cooperation with the City and the Parks District. The plan shall also include: details of the methods of shielding and placement of new above-ground components, such as valve stations, that would be viewable where no such components currently exist. The plan shall include a discussion of actions taken such that final pipeline alignment and construction activities associated with this project shall not interfere with the implementation of the Martinez Intermodal Project (which includes the new bridge over Alhambra Creek) and the Martinez drainage project. SPBPC shall not commence construction activities along the replacement segment in Martinez until the aesthetics resource plan is reviewed and approved by the East Bay Regional Parks District, the City of Martinez, and the CPUC mitigation monitor.

The CPUC's mitigation monitor shall verify compliance with the aesthetics plan during construction of the replacement section.

Significance after mitigation: Less than significant.

This proposed mitigation measure would reduce to a less than significant impact the potential for the project to create potential impact on aesthetics resources as the result of construction activities.

- b) No highways along the pipeline route are Officially Designated Scenic Highways, nor are any currently eligible for such designation. Carquinez Scenic Drive parallels the pipeline route in and near Martinez, but the crossing of Alhambra Creek, is on the opposite side of the railroad tracks and more than 800 feet northeast of Carquinez Scenic Drive. Though this road is an important local scenic resource, it is not an Officially Designated Scenic Highway. The proposed 4,000-foot replacement section also travels through the Martinez Regional Shoreline to the west of Martinez, but the short segment would not substantially affect the views from the roadway. Though historic buildings are within one-quarter mile of the missing section in the City of Martinez, construction of the missing section would likely not have any effect on nearby historic buildings. The potential for the project to substantially damage scenic resources, including trees and rock outcroppings along the route, is similar to the potential to substantially affect a scenic vista. Construction activities could have a temporary effect on some resources that are considered scenic resources by people living in or visiting the area, especially the vegetation that currently covers or adjoins the intended route for the new segment.

Impact I. 2: Vegetation removal, construction activity, and installation of the proposed 4,000-foot replacement section in Martinez would affect local scenic resources in the vicinity of the construction activity.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure I.1.

Significance after mitigation: Less than significant.

- c) The project's potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings is also similar to the potential to negatively affect scenic vistas and scenic resources. The project route travels through a wide variety of terrain and development, with either lush vegetation or developed infrastructure lining the route. Much of the route is within rail or road right-of-way, immediately adjacent or under railroad tracks or city streets. Minor maintenance activities along this route would not be expected to have a substantial negative effect on the visual character or quality of the project route. The potential for the construction of the missing section in Martinez to substantially degrade visual quality and character of the area is similar to the potential to damage scenic resources or scenic vistas. The planned route for the 4,000-foot replacement section borders parklands and other important scenic resources, with lush

vegetation being the primary visual character for people visiting the parks. With proper construction and restoration techniques, the buried pipeline would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the area, as the pipeline would not be visible to people visiting or living in the area. A potential exception would be the few aboveground components, such as valve stations, that would be viewable where no such components currently exist. With proper shielding, exterior treatment, and placement of these new aboveground components, the project would likely not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the project area.

Impact I. 3: Vegetation removal, construction activity, and installation of the proposed 4,000-foot replacement section in Martinez would degrade the existing visual character and quality of the project area.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure I.1.

Significance after mitigation: Less than significant.

- d) Operation of the existing pipeline and construction of the missing section would not entail the introduction of new lighting into the area. Therefore, there is no potential for the project to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

REFERENCES

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